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| 8 | *Ukholo omatsiyane* | Hawks fly and hover |
| 9 | *Ukholo omkhulu* | Hawks catch chickens |
| 10 | *Isiganyane esinciyane* | Trees begin to flower |
| 11 | *Isiganyane esikhulu* | Trees fruiting |
| 12 | *Inhlachana* | Trees fruiting |
| 13 | *Umgano* | Trees fruiting |

The months were more generally grouped in two main seasons: the rains, whose name meant that the earth was 'clothed and decorated with new grass, leaves and flowers'; and the dry season, the time for moving village sites, felling trees and clearing bush for new gardens, castrating oxen. It was the true Ngoni families who knew the names for the months and the relation of months to the seasons. Among these families in every Ngoni village there were men who watched the sun's movements, and noted the hill or tall trees behind which the sun set when it reached its most southerly point. This was for them one of the signals that the rains were near. If the rains did not begin when the sun reached this point, they announced that this year the rains were delayed and the crops would probably suffer. When the *inkaku* bird began to sing, the first man who heard it went to tell his neighbours to repair their hoe handles and begin to clear the fields, for the rains and the planting season was at hand. When a large flat mushroom appeared in the woodland, it too was the herald of rain.

Not only were these months and the seasons they indicated the means of regulating work. They were also the way by which the Ngoni reckoned time. They had rods for each month and notches for the days. They took these with them on campaigns, and when returning they produced the rods, and pointing to the notches they said: 'On the sixth day of the seventh month we began fighting against X's village,' or 'We reached that river on the first day of the fifth month.' Ngoni elders were however quick to point out that they were all trained from childhood up to have excellent memories,

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and the notched sticks were only an *aide-mémoire*, not a necessity.

*The heavens and the earth*

When the Pleiades appeared just before dawn they said the Pleiades were being 'reborn' (the word used for the new moon's appearance and for the initiation of a diviner), and that in this position in the heavens they were heralds of the cold season. They knew the relative positions of Venus as an evening star and a morning star, and watched for the appearance high in the heavens of Jupiter which they knew by its size. Orion they recognized as a man with a spear, a hunter, and the Milky Way as the sands of the sky, since sand was used to denote numbers which cannot be counted.

In announcing the death of a great chief by a messenger sent from village to village, the traditional formula was: 'Listen. Do you hear? The heavens have fallen.' Hence when earthquakes were felt, it was believed that some great chief had died, and the earthquake was the trembling when his spirit left the earth for the place of the departed spirits. If it turned out to be no one of their own people, they nevertheless held to the belief that somewhere, unknown to them, a 'great one' had died and his spirit had departed at the time of the earth's trembling.

Eclipses of the sun and moon they also connected with some great event either among their own people or elsewhere, and they used the eclipse year and month to date these events. Their famous crossing of the Zambezi on their northward march, finally and irrevocably cutting off their connexions with the south, was during a solar eclipse. In teaching young adults Ngoni history they said: 'When we crossed the Zambezi it became night at noon.'

A lunar eclipse, almost total, occurred when I was in a chief's village, and all the people were called to the kraal and stood watching it. Then the chief's spokesman, his 'mouthpiece', called for silence in the phrase used for a war summons